

Young Media Australia 50th Anniversary Speech

by Lesley Osborne

Thank you for the invitation to your birthday party this morning.

Fiftieth anniversaries are not occasions to be coy – so I'll confess to having known Barbara (Biggins) and had associations with the Australian Council for Children's Film and Television, now Young Media Australia, for almost 30 years – at the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, the Broadcasting Authority and now with The Australian Communications and Media Authority.

I'll save my personal reflections for over lunch, as this morning I am here to add ACMA's voice to the anniversary congratulations and to acknowledge YMA's achievements in enriching the public debate about children's media in Australia.

YMA's conviction that the electronic media are important in children's lives was demonstrated in early days with the ABT. The debate was how children might have access to good television programs made specifically for them and the change in broadcasting standards needed to achieve this.

The adoption of the internet by Australian families and concerns about children's use of the new media then shifted the spotlight for both the ABA and YMA to online and other digital services and development of community education strategies. In both formal and informal consultations with the previous regulators and with ACMA today, YMA was – and is – an energetic participant and stakeholder, with its advocacy informed by parental and public health concerns and the findings of academic research.

Like its predecessor organisations, ACMA, the combined communications and media regulator, takes its consultative role very seriously and is committed to consulting with its diverse range of community, consumer and industry stakeholders to make sure that its regulatory approach addresses the broad concerns of the community. Young Media Australia is of course a voice here.

ACMA also endeavours to be an 'evidenced-based' regulator, with research providing a robust and credible knowledge-base upon which to consider competing views and interests and ultimately make better informed, smarter decisions – an approach that has always been close to YMA's heart.

I think we all recognise that considerations around children and the media are increasingly complex – and certainly no less sensitive than in the past. How to make positive provision for children and also protect them from possible media harm continues to be hotly debated.

ACMA will welcome such debate on our forthcoming review of the Children's Television Standards, to be released within the first half of the year. I'm sure YMA as always will make a considered submission and not hold back on its views.

The review will provide a forum for revisiting some regulations which have not been canvassed for nearly 20 years. Television is still the dominant media for children, but we need to ask if the standards are meeting their original objective and how they could do this more effectively.

Thus you will note when the issues paper is released that it is firmly focused on free to air commercial television, as ACMA considers this review too early to expand the focus onto issues such as children's content across other platforms. YMA will also be pleased to see that we have incorporated the findings from ACMA research around the child audience and the standards.

On that note I wish YMA a happy anniversary and, on behalf of ACMA, I look forward to your contribution to the review and to energetic engagement on issues that will continue to be important for both our organisations, and for society generally.